

**MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
OCTOBER 7, 2002**

Chair William O’Gara called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to order at 1:06 p.m. at the Maine Emergency Service’s conference room, 156 Edison Drive, Augusta, Maine. Members present were Michael Albert, Jack Berry, Jay Bradshaw, Rep. Thomas Bull, John Dean, Rep. Robert Duplessie, Albert Godfrey, Sr., Geoffrey Maker, Harty Norris, Sen. William O’Gara, Chief Jethro Pease, Leslie Wiles (for Bill Williams), Steve Willis and Susan Pinette (staff).

The minutes of the September 9, 2002 meeting were distributed to Fire Commission members. It was noted that on page 2, paragraph 8, Al Godfrey made the second to the motion.

***A motion by Al Godfrey (seconded by Jeff Maker) to accept the minutes of September 9, 2002.*** The motion passed unanimously.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Report from the Training Facilities subcommittee:**

The subcommittee met October 5<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am. Members discussed the status of the training facility survey. Seven hundred and seventy-seven (777) surveys were mailed to Maine fire departments and EMS providers. To date, the subcommittee has received 175 responses and the data from the surveys will be entered into the Fire Commission’s database. The subcommittee also plans to follow up, by county, those departments not responding to the survey.

Subcommittee members plan to present their report to the Fire Commission at their December meeting. The report will rely on the following three pieces of data: 1) the Fire Department/EMS survey 2) the Training Provider survey and 3) the survey of other states’ training facilities. The report will focus on identifying needs and proposing a plan, but will not include cost estimates. A sample training provider/vendor form was provided to Fire Commission members.

**Report from the Recruitment/Retention subcommittee:**

Subcommittee members summarized a conference call with Penflex, Inc., the company contracted by the Fire Commission to conduct the length-of-service program (LOSP) study. Penflex is scheduled to make its final presentation to the Fire Commission on Monday, October 28<sup>th</sup>. Prior to that meeting, Penflex has requested clarification of the parameters and direction the Fire Commission wants to take on the study/ analysis. Subcommittee members explained that three issues need consensus to determine the realistic cost of the LOSP: defined benefit plan versus a defined contribution plan, vesting schedule, and eligibility assumption.

Fire Commission members discussed the differences between a defined benefits plan and a defined contribution plan, and the pros and cons of each plan. Members learned that a defined benefits plan was similar to the Maine State Retirement System plan- that benefits were determined at the beginning. A defined contribution plan was compared to a 401K plan- benefits were determined by the contribution and the yield of the contribution. Contributions from local, state and federal sources were discussed.

Members discussed eligibility and on what assumption Penflex will base their study/analysis. Discussion included eligibility and training requirements (24/24); a baseline and who will be able to meet it; retaining volunteers with seven or more years of service; and determining a realistic percentage of volunteers who will meet the training objectives. Members also discussed the benchmarks of a vesting schedule and how that will affect the final cost of the LOSP.

***A motion by Jay Bradshaw (seconded by Al Godfrey) to authorize the subcommittee to recommend a 75% assumption of eligibility to Penflex, Inc.*** The motion passed unanimously.

***A motion by John Dean (seconded by Jay Bradshaw) to authorize the subcommittee to request Penflex, Inc. to determine quotes on a length of service program (LOSP) for volunteer firefighters based on three amounts (\$15, \$20 and \$25) per month per year of credited service.*** The motion passed unanimously.

The subcommittee members will call Penflex, Inc. after today's meeting to relay the Fire Commission's recommendations.

The Fire Commission discussed the funding of the health care study and the commitment to pursuing both the health care and recruitment/retention studies. Members discussed funding sources to be explored- such as union partnerships or grants. Members will get an update on possible funding sources at their next meeting. Another alternative was the possibility of combining resources with other public safety agencies (EMS and law enforcement) with similar issues. Members heard that New Hampshire has a shared public safety program.

***A motion by Jethro Pease (seconded by Steve Willis) to table the discussion until members John Cannon and Darrel Fournier are present.*** The motion passed unanimously.

The Maine Fire Protection Services Day at the Legislature has been scheduled for Thursday, January 23, 2002.

Fire Commission members discussed the Fire Commission's "Best Practices" award. Different methods of presentation were discussed including highlighting the "best practice" as it occurs throughout the year and choosing an annual best "Best Practices" award to be presented at the Maine Fire Protection Services Day at the Legislature. A nomination form is being drafted and will be available on the Fire Commission's website. Members also discussed presenting the award at community events attended by Fire Commission members and the local press.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Fire Commission members discussed potential legislation for the 121<sup>st</sup> Legislature. Expanding the Fire Commission membership to include members from the Maine Emergency Medical Services and Maine Emergency Management Agency was suggested. Members discussed the Fire Commission's charge from the Legislature, the sharing of similar issues and the benefits gained from the expertise of MEMS and MEMA members. Members cited the membership of two Maine Fire Chiefs on the MEMS board. Members also discussed who would appoint the new members and agreed to mirror present legislation regarding the appointments of the Maine Forest Service, State Fire Marshal's Office and the Bureau of Labor Standards.

***A motion by Steve Willis (seconded by Jack Berry) to submit legislation in the 121<sup>st</sup> Session to expand the membership of the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to include the director or the designee of the Maine Emergency Medical Services and the director or designee of the Maine Emergency Management Agency.*** The motion passed unanimously.

The Fire Commission also discussed the issue of volunteer firefighters being fired from their employment after responding to emergency calls. The Fire Commission discussed the pros and cons of taking a formal position on this issue. Members spoke of the need for local fire chiefs to develop relationships with local employers and to educate people of the need to work together and foster good will. Further discussion included the problems of mandating local issues. Members agreed to emphasize the positive reasons for local businesses to voluntarily support firefighters. Assistance from the Maine Chamber of Commerce and presenting a "Best Practice" award for local businesses supporting volunteer firefighters were suggested ideas. Members also discussed potential problems that occur with release from work situations and lateness/absence due to responding to emergency calls.

***A motion by Jay Bradshaw (seconded by Steve Willis) that because the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission recognizes the important relationship between volunteer firefighters, local businesses and Maine communities; the valuable support by local employers; the need for local decision making; the need to foster good working relationships; and the lack of proposed legislation – the Fire Commission does not believe it appropriate or necessary to take a position at this time.*** The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Commission members revisited the issue of the commission membership. Members discussed the statute's requirement to appoint members of the legislature "who sit on the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over fire protection matters..." and agreed to strike all references to a specific committee of the Legislature. Members agreed the language should simply read "Two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate" and "Three members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives".

***A motion by Tom Bull (seconded by Jethro Pease) to submit legislation in the 121<sup>st</sup> Legislature to amend §3371, paragraph 2, A. and B., and strike all references to specific legislative committees.*** The motion passed unanimously.

Fire Commission members discussed the final report to the Maine Legislature and the Governor. Members spoke of the final report's content- the need to review the Commission's work in 2002, highlight the progress and accomplishments of the Commission, and list its future goals. Members also discussed various methods of presenting the final report including powerpoint presentations. Members agreed these presentations would be beneficial, informative and educational. Staff will provide an outline to members at the next meeting.

Fire Commission members learned of the successful firefighters' convention recently held in Freeport. Next year's convention will be in Madawaska.

Members agreed to attempt to schedule the Fire Commission picture at the October 28<sup>th</sup> meeting. Citing recent difficulties getting the entire Fire Commission together, members suggested taking individual pictures and placing on a common background.

The next meeting of the Fire Commission is scheduled for Monday, December 2, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. in the MEMS conference room.

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, the meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Pinette